

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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R 251335Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8459

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 740

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CY XF

SUBJECT: NIMBUS STAR: SECOND CARRIER

REF: CINCUSNAVEUR 251759Z APR TO UK MOD LONDON

SUMMARY: NAVY PLANS TO ROTATE USS INCHON FOR USS IWO JIMA, INVOLVING TEMPORARY DOUBLING OF MARINES AND HELICOPTERS AT DHEKELIA BRITISH BASE. WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER OUTCRY. WE PROPOSE TO TALK WITH BRITISH HICOM, ENCOURAGE GOCYPRUS PIO TO ANNOUNCE ROTATION BEFOREHAND SO AS TO DIMINISH VULNERABILITY TO CRITICISM.

1. NAVY EXPECTS TO MAKE NORMAL ROTATION OF USS INCHON VICE USS IWO JIMA IN MID-MAY. INITIAL HOPE HAD BEEN TO DEFER ROTATION UNTIL PARTICIPATION IN CANAL CLEARANCE HAD BEEN COMPLETED, BUT DELAY IN STARTING APPARENTLY HAS LED TO DECISION TO ROTATE.

2. PLAN CALLS FOR INCHON TO DISEMBARK MARINES AND HELICOPTERS
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AT DHEKELIA (BRITISH SOVEREIGN BASE) MAY 12, TAKE MINE SWEEP

EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL OVER FROM IWO JIMA IN PORT SAID MAY 13 AND 14. IWO JIMA WOULD PICK UP ITS MARINES AND HELICOPTERS AT DHEKELIA MAY 15.

3. ABOVE PLAN WILL RESULT IN FOUR CARRIER VISITS TO CYPRUS AREA RATHER THAN TWO WHICH BRITS HAD ANTICIPATED. FOR THREE DAYS U.S. PERSONNEL AT DHEKELIA WOULD DOUBLE TO ABOUT 24 HELICOPTERS AND ABOUT 300 MEN.

4. GIVEN CONTINUED ADVERSE PRESS ATTENTION TO OPERATION IN CYPRUS (SEPTELS), WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER OUTCRY WHEN ANOTHER CARRIER ARRIVES AND MORE MARINES SEEN LANDING. FROM OUR LOCAL STANDPOINT, WE NATURALLY WOULD PREFER TO AVOID NEW OCCASION FOR FOCUSING CRITICISM ON U.S. PRESENCE. ASSUME WASHINGTON HAS WEIGHED THIS CONSIDERATION AGAINST DISADVANTAGES OF DEFERRING ROTATION UNTIL SUEZ SWEEP COMPLETED, AND THAT CONTINUITY OF OPERATION REQUIRES TRANSFER HERE.

5. IN ANY EVENT, WE BELIEVE IT VERY IMPORTANT TO GET AHEAD OF ADVERSE STORY THIS ROUND. WE PROPOSE TO CONSULT WITH BRITISH HICOM, SUGGEST THAT HE OR WE BRIEF GOCYPRUS PIO AND URGE HIM TO TELL PRESS A DAY IN ADVANCE THAT ROTATION IS PLANNED. OTHERWISE WE WILL UNDERGO THREE DAYS OF ATTACKS FOR "FURTHER STEPS TO TAKE OVER SBA'S", PROBABLY WITH FOLLOW UP EFFORT WHEN IWO JIMA CONTINGENT DEPARTS TO CLAIM THAT PRESS CRITICISM FORCED US TO REVISE PLANS.

6. PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DATTS INDICATE UK HICOM WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH PROPOSED ADDITIONAL VISITS. THERE IS SOME RISK THAT GOC MAY OBJECT. IT WAS PREPARED FOR LEFTIST CRITICISM BUT OBVIOUSLY SOMEWHAT UPSET BY RIGHTIST CRITICISM. IN ANY EVENT, PRUDENT TO SMOKE IT OUT IN ADVANCE IF GOC RESISTANCE LIKELY.
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